

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Institute of the North****Federal Tax ID: 75-3155877****Project Title:****Project Type: Equipment and Materials****Institute of the North - We the People of Alaska Program****State Funding Requested: \$50,000****House District: Fairbanks Areawide (7-11)**

Future Funding May Be Requested

Brief Project Description:**Brief Project Description**

The Institute of the North is launching a program to engage students with Alaska's rich history and critical issues facing the state today. We the People of Alaska will supplement Alaska Studies high school courses through units on citizenship, natural resources, Alaska Natives, governing entities, the economy, and the Alaska model. It will culminate in regional competitions of simulated legislative hearings with winning teams presenting in Juneau.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$50,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2013 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$50,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

Funding Details:

unknown

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

The We the People of Alaska program is modeled after the Center for Civic Education's "We the People" program, funded until recently under the Education for Democracy Act to promote civic competence and responsibility across the nation. More than 30 million students have participated in some level of the "We the People" program, and a recent study found that alumni of the high school program demonstrate stronger civic and political engagement, with 91% of respondents voting in the last presidential election.

With a similar goal of inspiring civic engagement and knowledge in young Alaskans, "We the People of Alaska" is to be a statewide competition of simulated legislative hearings in which students present their research and opinions on important Alaska topics. The program comprises six units: citizenship, natural resources, Alaska Natives, governing entities, the economy, and the Alaska model. These areas were chosen for their importance to the development of Alaska and because they provide a foundation from which students can gain a greater understanding of the current issues facing our state. Due to the content overlap with the "Governing Alaska" and "Modern Alaska" units in the high school Alaska Studies curriculum, We the People of Alaska would serve as a supplement while these are taught.

While a fundamental shift from how the Alaska Studies class is currently taught, the program addresses many of the current challenges in Alaska Studies. In particular, "We the People of Alaska" demands student engagement through competition. Because it is student-driven, students are inspired by their own learning and investigation. Students are grouped into teams,

**\$50,000
Approved**

with specific questions to research and answer. A good response to these questions typically requires that several team-members answer, offering different points of view when possible and supporting their opinions with facts such as current events, court cases, statistics, and quotes from experts in the field.

Preparation involves extensive research, not only for their written response, but also for potential questions from the judges as well. While students must understand the historical basis of their topic, they also expand their interest in current issues, since much of their most interesting material comes from newspapers and other media in the form of current events. Students develop teamwork skills as they work together to create their response papers and practice their follow-up answers. Because they have no advance knowledge of the questions in the latter part of the competition, students must demonstrate critical thinking skills with a thorough understanding of their topic, instead of merely learning to recite information.

A pilot project will debut in Anchorage Alaska Studies classrooms during the spring semester of 2012. Teachers have responded enthusiastically to what promises to be a new and dynamic way to engage today's youth, tomorrow's citizens. Upon statewide implementation, the "We the People of Alaska" program will be scalable in terms of how competitions are conducted. In rural areas where travel is difficult, videoconferencing between schools may be used. Teams will be recognized for winning or progressing to subsequent rounds of competition. Finally, the top team will travel to Juneau and present for the Legislature.

Project Timeline:

2012-2013

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Institute of the North - or School Districts

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? Yes No